

# **Inventory and Evaluation Process for Lands that may or may not be Suitable for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

## **DRAFT Wilderness Evaluation (Step 2 of 4) Process Guide**

This DRAFT Wilderness Evaluation Process Guide focuses only on Step 2, the Evaluation Step. A Process Guide describing the entire Evaluation Process, including Inventory, Evaluation, Analysis and Recommendation is currently being developed and will be available for comment at a later date.

### **Introduction**

When revising the land management plan, the Manti- La Sal National Forest is required to identify and evaluate lands that may or may not be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend to Congress any such lands for wilderness<sup>1</sup>. A description of this process can be found in the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule (36 CFR – 219) and Chapter 70 of the Forest Service Land Management Planning Handbook 1909.12. This process includes the following four steps:

1. Inventory. Identify and inventory all lands that may or may not be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System using a given set of criteria
2. Evaluation. Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of each inventoried area using a given set of criteria
3. Analysis. The forest supervisor will determine which areas to further analyze in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process
4. Recommendation. The forest supervisor will decide which areas, if any, to recommend to Congress for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

Lands evaluated and analyzed through this process and the resulting NEPA analysis are only preliminary administrative recommendations; Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

### **Evaluation (Step 2)**

The primary function of the evaluation step is to identify all lands in the inventory for wilderness characteristics. All lands included from the inventory must be evaluated in this step. The evaluation is based on the criteria identified in the Forest Service Handbook and further defined by the Manti- La Sal National Forest through public and government participation<sup>2</sup>. This document outlines criteria definitions and the processes used to start the wilderness evaluation (step 2 of 4) for the Manti- La Sal National Forest.

The evaluation step of the process has a given set of criteria which are explained and identified below in the following sections.

---

<sup>1</sup> FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70, section 71.21 and section 71.22a

<sup>2</sup> FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70, section 70.61

## Evaluation Criteria Definitions

Chapter 70 of the Forest Service Land Management Planning Handbook 1909.12 outlines criteria for evaluation of lands for wilderness characteristics. These criteria, and initial draft definitions further defined by the Manti-La Sal National Forest planning team, are outlined in the following Tables (1-4).

### ***Criterion 1: Apparent Naturalness***

This criterion evaluates the degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

**Table 1. Apparent Naturalness Criteria**

Evaluation Criteria Identified in Planning Directives <sup>3</sup>	Evaluation Criteria Further Defined by Manti-La Sal National Forest
<u>Question 1a.</u> What is the composition of plant and animal communities? The purpose of this question is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural <sup>4</sup> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe the dominant vegetation types, associations, and plant and animal communities.</li><li>• How are concentrations of nonnative plants and/or animals distributed across the land?</li><li>• Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)</li></ul>
<u>Question 1b.</u> What is the extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe the distribution and amount of vegetation restoration treatments (e.g. thinning), timber harvest areas, and associated activities.</li><li>• Does the vegetation appear natural (consider elements, including but not limited to vegetation, wildlife, soil, air, etc.)?</li><li>• Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)</li></ul>

<sup>3</sup> From FSH 1909.12 Directives, Chapter 70

<sup>4</sup> When evaluating for apparent naturalness, the evaluation will be based on a balance between the perception of the average forest visitor and subject matter expertise

Evaluation Criteria Identified in Planning Directives <sup>3</sup>	Evaluation Criteria Further Defined by Manti-La Sal National Forest
<p><u>Question 1c.</u> What is the extent to which improvements<sup>5</sup> included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the extent to which the improvements cause the appearance to depart from apparent naturalness to the area as a whole. Consider the appearance and concentrations of all improvements listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Linear travelways, including any remaining roads (including system, decommissioned, temporary, or user-created), system trails<sup>6</sup>, and known unauthorized routes</li> <li>○ Airstrips, heliports, and/or landing zones</li> <li>○ Permanently installed vertical structures</li> <li>○ Areas of mining activity, including exploration and prospecting</li> <li>○ Range or wildlife improvements (such as fences, agricultural water pipelines (typically less than 2 inch diameter), water troughs, earthen tanks, corrals, or trick tanks).</li> <li>○ Recreation improvements</li> <li>○ Ground-return telephone lines, electric lines, and powerlines</li> <li>○ Watershed treatment areas (such as contouring, diking, channeling)</li> <li>○ Structures, dwellings, and other relics of past occupation (that are not considered a part of the cultural landscape)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)</li> </ul>

***Criterion 2- Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation***

This criterion evaluates the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. An area only has to possess one or the other; the area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre. The definitions for this criterion are identified in the table below.

<sup>5</sup> The use of the term “improvements” in this context is taken from the Forest Service Handbook, and means the evidence of past human activities in the area as a whole.

<sup>6</sup> System trails are acceptable improvements in wilderness areas; the purpose of this consideration is to consider whether or not the concentration, appearance, and density of system trails in the area impact the area’s apparent naturalness.

**Table 2. Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation Criteria**

Evaluation Criteria Identified in Planning Directives <sup>7</sup>	Evaluation Criteria Further Defined by Manti- La Sal National Forest
<p><u>Question 2a.</u> Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can a traveler see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area? Consider proximity of area to high use areas, private lands, roads<sup>8</sup>, and/or activities that impact opportunities for solitude. Consider pervasiveness of impacts, and also potential seasonal variabilities.</li> <li>• What is the level of challenge and risk in the area? What is the likelihood of encounters with others?</li> <li>• Describe the general topography of the area in context of sight, sound, and screening.</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>
<p><u>Question 2b.</u> Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature.</p> <p><i>Note: Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the types of primitive recreation activities in the area.</li> <li>• Describe other types of non-primitive recreation activities in the area.</li> <li>• Is the area relatively free of restrictions on visitor behavior, providing an unconfined experience?</li> <li>• Are facilities or user controls provided that decrease opportunities for self-reliant recreation?</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> From FSH 1909.12 Directives, Chapter 70

<sup>8</sup> Including any effects from adjacent cherry-stemmed roads along area boundaries.

### **Criterion 3- Unique and Outstanding Qualities**

This criterion evaluates the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

When evaluating unique and outstanding qualities, consider if the feature is iconic, unique at a regional or national scale, and the extent that the feature defines how people think about and value the area. The definitions for this criterion are identified in the table below.

**Table 3. Unique and Outstanding Qualities Criteria**

<b>Evaluation Criteria Identified in Planning Directives<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>Evaluation Criteria Further Defined by Manti-La Sal National Forest</b>
<p><u>Question 3a.</u> Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems?</p> <p><i>Note: Rare in this context is defined as national or regional in scale.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of rare species or ecosystems?</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>
<p><u>Question 3b.</u> Are there any outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of any outstanding and unique features in the area, including significance and extent.</li> <li>• Percent of area mapped as Scenic Class 1 in the Forest's Scenery Management System inventory.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>
<p><u>Question 3c.</u> Are there historic and cultural resource sites in the area of regional or national significance?</p> <p><i>Consider if the feature is nationally recognized (for example, through an official designation such as the National Register) or if the features is considered a priority heritage asset.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of significant historic or cultural resources sites?</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>
<p><u>Question 3d.</u> Are there any research natural areas?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of area that is part of a research natural area.</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>
<p><u>Question 3e.</u> Are there any high quality water resources or important watershed features?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence and extent of high quality water resources or important watershed features in the area.</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> From FSH 1909.12 Directives, Chapter 70

<sup>10</sup> The Forest Service's Scenery Management System (SMS) provides the framework to effectively inventory, assess, and manage scenic resources. Scenic Class is a component of the SMS inventory, and is the primary indicator of the relative importance, or public value, of areas with distinctive scenery and visibility. It is a combination of distinct landscape features (landform, vegetation, rocks, water features, cultural features) and the extent that the public values and sees these features. Scenic Class 1 represents those areas that are most valued, most visible, and contain the most distinct landscape features. Refer to the Forest Service Scenery Management Handbook for more information, [http://fsweb.r1.fs.fed.us/rmlhw/scenery\\_mgmt/handbooks\\_references/sms\\_hanbook\\_701-opt.pdf](http://fsweb.r1.fs.fed.us/rmlhw/scenery_mgmt/handbooks_references/sms_hanbook_701-opt.pdf).

#### **Criterion 4: Manageability**

This criterion evaluates the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics, considering current conditions. The definitions for this criterion are identified in the table below.

**Table 4. Manageability Criteria**

Evaluation Criteria Identified in Planning Directives <sup>11</sup>	Evaluation Criteria Further Defined by Manti-La Sal National Forest
<p><u>Question 4a.</u> Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?</p> <p><i>Describe factors that are or are not compatible with managing for wilderness character.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shape and configuration of the area. Describe the boundary, edge to interior ratio, and presence of cherry-stemmed roads, etc.</li> <li>• Presence and extent of legally established rights or uses within the area and how these uses may support or impact managing an area for wilderness characteristics (e.g. active mining claims, grazing allotment maintenance needs, motorized or mechanized use such as mountain biking, special uses, cultural or traditional uses)<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• Presence and extent of any specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics (including but not limited to designated or proposed critical habitat).</li> <li>• Describe management of adjacent lands.</li> <li>• Presence and extent of wildland urban interface in the area. Include percent if possible.</li> <li>• Describe management activities or restrictions within the area (e.g. signed management decisions).</li> <li>• Presence of Inventoried Roadless Area. Include % if possible.</li> <li>• Other (Include any additional information)</li> </ul>

### **Manti-La Sal National Forest Evaluation Processes**

Categorical Values (Table 5) were used to help evaluate areas for wilderness characteristics as part of the Wilderness Evaluation Process (Step 2 of 4). The Wilderness Evaluation process requires that all units identified in the Inventory (Step 1 of 4) be evaluated for the presence of wilderness characteristics in the Evaluation (Step 2 of 4). No units are excluded or eliminated in the Evaluation Step.

Wilderness characteristics are determined using criteria from the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70, and further defined by the Manti- La Sal National Forest. These criteria are found in Tables 1-4 of this document. Information from the Evaluation Criteria, along with specialist and public

<sup>11</sup> From FSH 1909.12 Directives, Chapter 70

<sup>12</sup> The impacts and alternatives relating to unauthorized uses are considered in the analysis phase of the inventory and evaluation of lands that may be suitable for inclusion in NWPS. For example, if an area experiencing unauthorized fuelwood cutting was carried forward in an alternative as potential wilderness, the impacts and effects of managing unauthorized use within a recommended wilderness area would be analyzed (e.g. increased enforcement needs). Additionally, this same area may be included in an alternative as a potential fuelwood gathering management area as an alternative to potential wilderness.

## Manti- La Sal National Forest Evaluation Processes continued...

input, will inform which areas or parts of areas will be included in one or more alternatives and analyzed further (Step 3 of 4).

The interdisciplinary team held 9 internal meetings in the summer of 2017 to create narratives based on the Wilderness Evaluation Criteria (Tables 1-4). The interdisciplinary team used geospatial (map) data, and interdisciplinary field knowledge for filling out narratives for the evaluation (step 2 of 4). Specialists then reviewed the narrative with the geospatial data and after a discussion, collectively identified a categorical value for that criterion. This process repeated for all criteria questions for all inventoried units. The narratives document on-the-ground conditions of wilderness characteristics and provide rationale for the categorical values.

The Categorical Values Definitions (Table 5) were developed to assist the interdisciplinary team in making a High, Moderate, Low or No determination for every question used to evaluate each of the four criteria for wilderness characteristics. The Categorical Value Guide helped ensure consistency across districts and the Forest.

The product from this process is a spreadsheet with the narratives and the associated categorical value that the interdisciplinary team applied to every inventory unit. The definitions for the criteria of each wilderness characteristic value are listed in the table below.

**Table 5: Wilderness Character Categorical Value Definitions**

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTIC	Criteria	Wilderness Categorical Value Guides
<b>Criterion 1: Apparent Naturalness</b>  <b>Throughout the evaluation, it is important to consider the criteria from the perspective of the average visitor.</b>	Question 1a. What is the composition of plant and animal communities?	<b>High</b> - Non-native species are not evident. The composition of plant and animal communities appears natural.
		<b>Moderate</b> - Non-native species are evident in isolated spots or low numbers scattered throughout. The composition of plant and animal communities appears natural in most areas.
		<b>Low</b> - Non-native species are common in the area. The composition of plant and animal communities appears natural in some areas.
		<b>No</b> – Non-native species are dominant in the area. The composition of plant and animal communities represents a departure from apparent naturalness in the majority of the area.
	Question 1b. What is the extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?	<b>High</b> – Vegetation appears natural.
		<b>Moderate</b> – Vegetation does not appear natural in isolated or scattered spots.
		<b>Low</b> –Vegetation does not appear natural commonly in the area.

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTIC	Criteria	Wilderness Categorical Value Guides
		<b>No</b> – Vegetation does not appear natural throughout the area.
	Question 1c. What is the extent to which improvements included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?	<b>High</b> – Little or no evidence of human activity. Prevalence of improvements is rare or scattered. The presence or appearance of improvements does not detract from apparent naturalness. It is rare to see improvements.
	Consider how vegetation and terrain affect the average visitor's awareness of improvements. I.e. a small structure in an open landscape may impact apparent naturalness more than a larger structure in a dense forest.	<b>Moderate</b> – Unnoticeable or unobjectionable human activity. Prevalence of improvements is overall low throughout the area, it may be concentrated in some spots but is more typically dispersed through the area. It is common to find spots where improvements are absent or unseen. Appearance of improvements detract from apparent naturalness in some areas.
		<b>Low</b> – Noticeable evidence of human activity, area has high level of human disturbance. Prevalence of improvements is overall high throughout the area, and is often concentrated. Although spots where improvements are absent or unseen are uncommon, they exist. Appearance of improvements detract from apparent naturalness in most areas.
		<b>No</b> - Obvious evidence of human activity. Prevalence of improvements is very high throughout the area and there are very few or no spots where improvements are absent or unseen. Appearance of improvements detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.
<b>Criterion 2: Solitude/Primitive and Unconfined Recreation</b>	Question 2a. Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.	<b>High</b> – Common or significant feeling of being alone or remote from civilization. Human activities are rare.
		<b>Moderate</b> –Opportunities to feel alone are possible in much of the area, though signs of civilization are possible. Human activities are uncommon.
		<b>Low</b> – Little opportunity of feeling alone. Human activities or presence is common. Signs of civilization are common or likely.
		<b>No</b> - No opportunity of feeling alone. Human activities or presence is unavoidable. Signs of civilization are pervasive.
	Question 2b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation	<b>High</b> – There are abundant opportunities for engaging in primitive and unconfined recreation. These opportunities are of high quality.



WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTIC	Criteria	Wilderness Categorical Value Guides
	activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature.	<b>Moderate</b> – There are some opportunities for engaging in primitive and unconfined recreation. At least some of these opportunities are of high quality.
		<b>Low</b> – There are few opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation. Any existing opportunities are poor.
		<b>No</b> – There are no opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation.
<b>Criterion 3: Unique and outstanding qualities</b>  When evaluating unique and outstanding qualities, consider if the feature is iconic, unique at a regional or national scale, and the extent that the feature defines how people think about and value the area.	Question 3a. Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems?	<b>Yes</b>
		<b>No</b>
	Question 3b. Are there any outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?	<b>Yes</b>
		<b>No</b>
	Question 3c. Are there historic and cultural resource sites in the area of regional or national significance?	<b>Yes</b>
		<b>No</b>
	Question 3d. Are there any research natural areas?	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Criterion 4: Management</b>		<b>No</b>
	Question 3e. Are there any high quality water resources or important watershed features?	<b>Yes</b>
		<b>No</b>
	Question 4a. To what degree can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?	<b>High</b> – Presence and extent of other uses and management considerations (e.g. shape or configuration) affects isolated spots and makes management to preserve the areas wilderness characteristics possible throughout the area.
		<b>Moderate</b> – The presence and extent of other uses and/or other management considerations (e.g. shape or configuration) is scattered and makes management to preserve the area's wilderness characteristics possible throughout much of the area.
		<b>Low</b> – The presence and extent of other uses and/or management considerations (e.g. shape or configuration) occurs across most of the area making it difficult to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.
		<b>No</b> – The presence and extent of other uses and/or management considerations (e.g. shape or configuration) in the area is pervasive making it impossible to manage the majority of the area to preserve wilderness characteristics.